

The Korean War G.I. Bill of 1952 first established this new responsibility—it said that veterans could only use their benefits at colleges that were accredited by an agency recognized by what was called the Commissioner of Education, and then after the Department of Education was created in 1979, the Secretary of Education.

The Higher Education Act of 1965 used this same idea when it created federal financial aid for non-veteran college students. Around this time, about 10% of the population had received a college degree.

However, the 1992 Higher Education Act Amendments were the first time the law said much about what standards accreditors needed to use when assessing quality at institutions of higher education.

Today, current law outlines 10 broad standards that federally recognized accreditors must have when reviewing colleges: student achievement; curriculum; faculty; facilities; fiscal and administrative capacity; student support services; recruiting and admissions practices; measure of program length; student complaints; and compliance with Title IV program responsibility.

The law tells accreditors that they must measure student achievement, but it doesn't tell them how to do it.

Colleges and accreditors determine the specifics of the standards—not the Department of Education.

For the student achievement standard, colleges and universities define how they meet that standard based on their mission—the law specifically doesn't let the Department of Education regulate or define student achievement.

And in fact, in 2007, when the Department of Education tried to do that, Congress stopped it.

Still, Congress spends approximately \$33 billion for Pell grants each year, and taxpayers will lend over \$100 billion in loans this year that students have to pay back.

So we have a duty to make certain that students are spending that money at quality colleges and universities.

I believe there are two main concerns about accreditation:

First, is it ensuring quality?

And second, is the federal government guilty of getting in the way of accreditors doing their job?

The Task Force on Government Regulation of Higher Education, which was commissioned by a bipartisan group of senators on this committee, told us in a detailed report that federal rules and regulations on accreditors have turned the process into federal "micro-management."

In addressing these two concerns, I think we should look at five areas:

First, are accreditors doing enough to ensure that students are learning and receiving a quality education?

A recent survey commissioned by Inside Higher Ed found that 97% of chief academic officers at public colleges and universities believe their institution is "very or somewhat effective at preparing students for the workforce."

But a Gallup survey shows that business leaders aren't so sure—only one-third of American business leaders say that colleges and universities are graduating students with the skills and competencies their businesses need. Nearly a third of business leaders disagree, with 17% going as far as to say that they strongly disagree.

Second, would more competition and choice among accreditors be one way to improve quality?

Accreditation is one of the few areas in higher education without choice and competition. Today colleges and universities cannot choose which regional accrediting

agency they'd like to use. If they could, would that drive quality?

Third, do federal rules and regulations force accreditors to spend too much time on issues other than quality?

Accreditation may now be "cops on the beat" for Department of Education rules and regulations unrelated to academic quality. Accreditors review fire codes, institutional finances (something the Department of Education already looks at) and whether a school is in compliance with Department rules for Title IV. To me, these don't seem to be an accreditor's job.

Fourth, do accreditors have the right tools and flexibility to deal with the many different institutions with many different needs and circumstances?

Some well-established institutions may not need to go through the same process as everyone else, allowing accreditors to focus on those institutions that need the most help.

Finally, could the public benefit from more information about accreditation?

All the public learns from the accreditation process is whether a school is accredited or unaccredited. Even at comparable colleges, quality may vary dramatically, yet all institutions receive the same, blanket "accredited" stamp of approval. Seems to me that there could be more information provided to students, families or policymakers.

We'd better find a way to make accreditation work better.

There's really not another way to do this—to monitor quality. Because if accreditation doesn't do it, I can assure you that Congress can't. And the Department of Education certainly doesn't have the capacity or know-how.

They could hire a thousand bureaucrats to run around the country reviewing 6,000 colleges, but you can imagine what that would be like.

They're already trying to rate colleges, and no one is optimistic about their efforts—I think they'll collapse of their own weight.

So it's crucial that accrediting of our colleges improve.

Our witnesses have a variety of viewpoints on accreditation and I look forward to the discussion.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COUNCIL

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I want to recognize the hard work, dedication, and achievements of the Northwest Arkansas Council, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary. This organization helped transform Northwest Arkansas into an economic powerhouse. In 1990, business and community leaders created a cooperative regional business foundation with a focus on what is best for the region. Now, 25 years later, the council has strengthened partnerships and achieved many successes.

Early on, the council recognized the importance of expanding the region's infrastructure. It planted the seeds for development by pursuing the construction of a new regional airport, an interstate to connect western Arkansas, and a massive 2-ton water system to serve Benton and Washington Counties.

These priorities laid the foundation for the expansive growth and development of the region. Northwest Arkan-

sas continues to flourish under the council's encouragement and vision. By focusing on the future and on mutually beneficial goals, the council is a leader in visualizing and promoting investments that meet the needs of citizens and local businesses. In recent years, the council's goals have expanded toward growing the region's workforce, including increasing the number of high school and college graduates and attracting top talent.

This unique partnership encourages communities throughout the region to think about long-term goals and creates a strategic plan to accomplish them. What is impressive is that the council consistently achieves most of its goals, often ahead of schedule.

The council is a model for success. Economic development regions across Arkansas and throughout the country use the council as a model, with hopes of achieving similar success. The council has demonstrated the value of cooperation and collaboration, as well as the importance of keeping attention focused on common ground and shared interests.

I congratulate the Northwest Arkansas Council on its 25-year commitment to growth and development and for continuing to make the region better through infrastructure improvements, workforce development, and regional stewardship. I look forward to continuing to work with the Northwest Arkansas Council and seeing its future achievements.●

REMEMBERING SHERIFF RALPH LAMB

• Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, today we honor the life and legacy of former Clark County Sheriff Ralph Lamb, whose passing signifies a great loss to Nevada. I send my condolences and prayers to his wife Rae and all of Mr. Lamb's family in this time of mourning. He was a man committed to his family, his country, his State, and his community. Although he will be sorely missed, his legendary influence throughout the Silver State will continue on.

Mr. Lamb was born on April 10, 1927, in a small ranching community in Alamo. He was one of 11 children who helped on the family farm and worked in the local schoolhouse to support the family. At 11 years old, his father was killed in a rodeo accident, and he was taken in by his oldest brother Floyd Lamb. Mr. Lamb served in the Army during World War II in the Pacific Theater, later returning to Nevada. He became a Clark County deputy sheriff and soon after was named chief of detectives. In 1954, he left the Clark County Sheriff's Department to form a private detective agency.

It wasn't until 1958 that Mr. Lamb showed interest in returning to the department. He was named Clark County Sheriff in 1961 and served under this title for 18 years, an unprecedented amount of time that continues to be